

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
Monday, August 16, 2010
9:00 a.m. EDT

NIDA Contacts: NIDA Press Office
301-443-6245
media@nida.nih.gov

NIDA and Federal Partners to Launch National Drug Facts Week
November Awareness Week Promotes Scientific Facts about Drugs for Teens

Expanding on its online Drug Facts Chat Day, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) today announced it is launching National Drug Facts Week, a new national awareness week to bring together teens and scientific experts to discuss the facts about drug abuse. NIDA is a component of the National Institutes of Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“What we learned through our annual Web chat is that teens have many questions about drug use and are eager for objective, factual answers,” said NIDA Director Dr. Nora Volkow. “So we wanted to build a series of events where teens could ask scientists their questions directly.”

The week, which starts on Monday, November 8, encourages community-based question and answer events between teens and scientists. Events can be sponsored by a variety of organizations, including schools, community groups, sports clubs, book clubs, and local hospitals. NIDA provides an online toolkit that advises teens and their sponsoring organizations on to how create an event, how to publicize it, how to find a scientific expert, and where to find scientific information on drugs.

National Drug Facts Week is being supported by multiple federal agencies that share an interest in preventing teen drug abuse. They are:

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in HHS, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at NIH, the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools in the U.S. Department of Education, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the U.S. Department of Transportation, The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice, and the National Guard, part of the U.S. Department of Defense. Each of these agencies will post National Drug Facts Week information on their Web sites, and many will hold special events linking scientists to teens.

“Knowledge is the most powerful tool we can provide our teens with to help them make good, healthy, responsible decisions,” said ONDCP Director R. Gil Kerlikowske. “By empowering teens to think critically about drug use and its consequences, we can improve the health and safety of a generation.”

The Department of Education will encourage schools and educators all over America to hold events. “President Obama has set an ambitious goal as part of his American Graduation Initiative that by 2020 America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world,” noted Department of Education Assistant Deputy Secretary Kevin Jennings. “We know that high-risk drinking and drug use by college students, and teens in high school preparing for college, contribute to numerous academic, social, and health-related problems — and this must be addressed if we are to achieve the President’s goal. By talking with young people and sharing facts in a straightforward, scientific and non-judgmental fashion, National Drug Facts Week will reach a great many teens who otherwise might not get this vital and life saving information.”

The Drug Enforcement Administration will post special scientific information on its teen site, Just Think Twice. “Keeping America’s teens informed about drugs is as important a mission to the DEA as is keeping drug dealers out of our communities and off the Internet,” said Michele Leonhart, the DEA Acting Administrator. “Knowledge is a powerful weapon against those who would exploit our kids, and DEA enthusiastically partners with NIDA and other agencies to put on National Drug Facts Week.”

The week will also include the launch of the first annual “National Drug IQ Challenge,” a 20-question multiple choice quiz that teens and adults can take to test their science based knowledge about drugs. The quiz can be found on the National Drug Facts Week Web site. High scorers will be rewarded with five additional Brainiac questions that focus on the brain. The quiz and other information on National Drug Facts Week can be found at <http://drugfactsweek.drugabuse.gov/>

###

The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy and improve practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at www.drugabuse.gov. To order publications in English or Spanish, call NIDA's new DrugPubs research dissemination center at 1-877-NIDA-NIH or 240-645-0228 (TDD) or fax or email requests to 240-645-0227 or drugpubs@nida.nih.gov. Online ordering is available at <http://drugpubs.drugabuse.gov>. NIDA's new media guide can be found at <http://drugabuse.gov/mediaguide/>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov>.